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Intelligence Information Cable

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DIST 20 AUGUST 1977

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COUNTRY:

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DOI : 19 AUGUST 1977

SUBJECT: (1) CURRENT PLO POSITION ON 242

(2) SOVIET AND ARAB ADVICE TO PLO ON 242

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SOURCE :

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SUMMARY: THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION (PLO) HAS NOT FINALLY REJECTED THE IDEA OF ANNOUNCING ACCEPTANCE OF UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 242 WHICH WOULD OPEN AN OFFICIAL DIALOGUE WITH THE UNITED STATES. THE PREVAILING MOOD WITHIN THE PLO LEADERSHIP, HOWEVER, IS INCREASINGLY AGAINST SUCH AN ANNOUNCEMENT. THE SAUDIS, EGYPTIANS AND THE SOVIETS HAVE URGED THE PLO LEADERSHIP TO MAKE A RESERVED ANNOUNCEMENT OF

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ACCEPTANCE OF RESOLUTION 242. THE SYRIANS HAVE ADVISED THE
PLO NOT TO ANNOUNCE ACCEPTANCE OF THE RESOLUTION UNLESS THE
UNITED STATES OFFERS A MORE TANGIBLE QUID PRO QUO THAN JUST
A PLO/US DIALOGUE. THE 18 AUGUST COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE
PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WAS THE RESULT OF SYRIAN PRESSURE AND
MADE TO PLEASE THE SYRIAN REGIME.

1. AS OF LATE 19 AUGUST, THE PLO LEADERSHIP WAS STILL
DISCUSSING A POSSIBLE ANNOUNCEMENT OF ACCEPTANCE OF RESOLUTION
242. THE MOOD OF THE PLO LEADERSHIP, HOWEVER, IS INCREASINGLY
AGAINST SUCH A STATEMENT. DESPITE EFFORTS BY FATAH MODERATES
TO CONVINCE THE REST OF THE LEADERSHIP THAT A DIALOGUE WITH THE
US ENTAILS SUFFICIENT LONG RANGE BENEFITS TO JUSTIFY MAKING THE
REQUIRED STATEMENT ON 242, THE PLO LEADERSHIP REMAINS LARGELY
CONVINCED THAT IT MUST DEMAND MORE THAN JUST TALKS WITH THE US
BEFORE GIVING UP WHAT IT CONSIDERS TO BE ITS ONLY MAJOR "CARD"
IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS.

2. ON 17 AUGUST, OFFICIALS OF THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN BEIRUT
MET WITH PLO OFFICIALS. THE SOVIETS TOLD THE PLO OFFICIALS THAT
THEY HAD RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM MOSCOW, INSTRUCTING THEM TO MEET
WITH THE PLO AND TO DELIVER THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE: "THE SOVIET

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LEADERSHIP CONSIDERS IT IMPORTANT THAT THE PLO ACCEPT UN RESOLUTION 242, WITH THE RESERVATIONS PROPOSED BY THE UNITED STATES. SUCH AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF ACCEPTANCE WOULD DENY THE ISRAELIS AND THE UNITED STATES THE JUSTIFICATION THAT THEY HAVE SO FAR USED TO KEEP THE PALESTINIANS OUT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT OF THE MIDDLE EAST QUESTION." THE PLO OFFICIALS NOTED THE SIGNIFICANT ESCALATION OF SOVIET PRESSURE FROM THAT OF URGING "FLEXIBILITY" TO THAT OF SPECIFICALLY URGING THE PLO TO ACCEPT THE US POSITION ON 242.

3. THE SYRIANS ON THE OTHER HAND HAVE URGED THE PLO NOT TO ACCEPT RESOLUTION 242 UNLESS MORE THAN A DIALOGUE WITH THE US WOULD RESULT. ON 17 AUGUST, SYRIAN PRESIDENT HAFIZ AL-ASAD MET WITH AHMAD DAJJANI, A MEMBER OF THE PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, IN DAMASCUS. ASAD REITERATED HIS POSITION THAT THE PLO SHOULD HOLD OUT FOR MORE THAN JUST A DIALOGUE WITH THE US. ASAD TOLD DAJJANI THAT, DURING US SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE'S VISIT TO DAMASCUS, ASAD HAD ASKED VANCE SPECIFICALLY WHETHER THE PALESTINIANS WOULD OBTAIN MORE THAN JUST A DIALOGUE WITH THE US IN EXCHANGE FOR A STATEMENT OF ACCEPTANCE OF 242. ASAD SAID THAT VANCE WAS EMPHATIC IN HIS STATEMENT THAT THE

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US WAS NOT OFFERING ANYTHING MORE THAN AN AGREEMENT TO TALK WITH THE PLO.

4. THE ANNOUNCEMENT, ON 18 AUGUST, THAT THE PLO CONTINUED TO OPPOSE THE ACCEPTANCE OF RESOLUTION 242 WAS MADE TO PLEASE THE SYRIANS. THE SELECTION OF MUHAMMAD A B U M A Y Z A R TO MAKE THIS ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE BECAUSE ABU MAYZAR HAS CLOSE TIES WITH THE SYRIANS.

5. THE SAUDIS AND EGYPTIANS CONTINUE TO URGE PLO ACCEPTANCE OF RESOLUTION 242. THE PLO HAS ATTEMPTED TO HANDLE ITS MAJOR MOVES REGARDING THIS RESOLUTION WITH THE SAUDIS. ON 3 AUGUST 1977 YASIR A R A F A T , THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, FORMALLY AGREED WITH SAUDI CROWN PRINCE F A H D IBN ABD AL-AZIZ AND SAUDI FOREIGN MINISTER PRINCE S A U D IBN FAYSAL THAT THE PLO WOULD AGREE TO MAKE THE ANNOUNCEMENT PROPOSED BY THE US, IN EXCHANGE FOR US AGREEMENT TO THREE CONDITIONS: (1) US RECOGNITION OF THE PLO AS "THE LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE," (2) THE OFFICIAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE US AND PLO, AND (3) A US COMMITMENT TO INVITE THE PLO TO THE GENEVA MIDDLE EAST PEACE CONFERENCE, ON THE BASIS OF THE PLO'S RESERVED POSITION ON RESOLUTION 242. ON 9 AUGUST

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PRINCE SAUD MET WITH PLO CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER MAHMUD A B B A S (ABU MAZIN) AND MUHAMMAD ABU MAYZAR. HE TOLD THEM THAT THE US COULD NOT ACCEPT THE PLO CONDITIONS AND HAD ADDED THE FOLLOWING "CLARIFICATIONS" TO THE US POSITION: (1) ACCEPTANCE OF THE PLO AS A PARTNER IN A DIALOGUE WOULD NOT MEAN US RECOGNITION OF THE PLO AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, (2) THE US WOULD CONTINUE TO SPEAK OF THE NEED FOR A "PALESTINIAN ENTITY" AND WOULD NOT USE LANGUAGE CALLING FOR AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE, AND (3) THE US COULD NOT INVITE THE PLO TO GENEVA UNLESS ALL ORIGINAL PARTIES TO THE CONFERENCE, INCLUDING ISRAEL, AGREED. PRINCE SAUD URGED THE PLO TO ACCEPT THE US POSITION, EVEN WITH THESE CLARIFICATIONS.

6. ON 11 AUGUST ABU MAZIN MET WITH SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER 'ABD AL-HALIM K H A D D A M AND DISCUSSED THE US AND SAUDI POSITIONS WITH HIM. KHADDAM REACTED NEGATIVELY TO THE IDEA OF ACCEPTANCE OF THE US POSITION. HE ASKED THE PLO OFFICIAL RHETORICALLY WHETHER THE PALESTINIANS WOULD SELL THEMSELVES SO CHEAPLY.

7. ISRAELI MOVES TO EXTEND SOCIAL SERVICES TO RESIDENTS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND TO ESTABLISH NEW SETTLEMENTS IN

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OCCUPIED TERRITORIES GREATLY STRENGTHENED THE HANDS OF HARD
LINERS ON THE QUESTION OF RESOLUTION 242. FATAH MODERATES HAVE
TRIED TO ARGUE THAT THE US CONDEMNATION OF ISRAEL FOR THESE
ACTIONS IS FAR STRONGER THAN USUAL US LANGUAGE ON THE SUBJECT
OF ISRAELI ACTIONS. THE HARD LINERS, HOWEVER, ARGUE THAT THE
US HAS NOT TAKEN ANY ACTION TO PREVENT OR REVERSE THESE ACTIONS
AND THAT THE SITUATION CALLS FOR ACTIONS RATHER THAN JUST
STATEMENTS.

8. FIELD DISSEM: 

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